



AOT in Action

TOURISM WORKS FOR ARIZONA!

Welcome to AOT in Action, your weekly e-newsletter from the Arizona Office of Tourism (AOT).

A Message from the Director:

Good morning.

A travel agent in Chicago now has the opportunity to become an Arizona Travel Specialist.

We're excited to announce the launch of our **Arizona Accreditation Program (AZAP)**. This innovative program is a great way to help travel agents become more familiar with the amazing travel experiences found only in Arizona. For more information on the AZAP program, please read the *AOT News Flash* section below.

Also, as a reminder for those of you who were unable to attend the 2008 Governor's Conference on Tourism, you can now access many of the presentations from the event at www.aztourismconference.com. The presentations are found under the "register" tab, and then under "sessions."

Have a great week.

Margie A. Emmermann
Director
Arizona Office of Tourism

AOT News Flash

Agents to be “AZAPed” with Arizona Knowledge

Domestic travel agents can now become Arizona specialists! The Arizona Office of Tourism launched AZAP, the Arizona Accreditation Program, an online education program for travel agents to become travel specialists for the Grand Canyon State. The program gives an overview of Arizona travel product as well as key traveler information. It then offers several quizzes that test the agent's knowledge of the destination. Upon successful completion of the quizzes, agents receive certification, continuing education credits with the Travel Institute, are eligible for monthly prizes and an Arizona FAM trip. *Recommend Magazine*, which reaches more than 48,000 agents in the U.S. and Canada and has more than 13,000 active members, produced the online program for AOT. You can access the Web site at www.recommend.com.

For more information AZAP, contact Jennifer Sutcliffe 602-364-3693 or via e-mail at jsutcliffe@azot.gov or Kristy Swanson at 602-364-3696 or via e-mail at kswanson@azot.gov.

AOT's Research Section has been Updated

The following items have been updated in the Research and Statistics section of AOT's business-to-business Web site www.azot.gov.

- [Arizona County Lodging Trends 1998-2007](#)

For additional information or questions, please contact Beth Billings, Research Specialist, at 602-364-3689 or via e-mail at bbillings@azot.gov.

Trippin' with AOT

International Market Presentations Now Available!

During the recent Arizona Governor's Conference on Tourism in Tucson, AOT's international market representatives from Germany, Japan, Mexico, and the United Kingdom gave detailed presentations on their respective markets. The presentations outlined current economic and travel trends to the United States and Arizona. Additionally, the presentations highlighted AOT's activities in these important markets during the 2007/2008 fiscal year. The upcoming sales missions and trade shows were also announced. These presentations are now available for review and downloading at: <http://www.azot.gov/section.aspx?sid=9&psid=3>

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Hylton Fothergill at 602-364-706 or via e-mail at hfothergill@azot.gov.

Register Now for the 11th Annual Arizona Showcase in Hermosillo

The Arizona Office of Tourism will hold the 11th Annual Arizona Showcase October 2, 2008 in Hermosillo, Sonora, Mexico. This event promotes fall and holiday shopping, attractions and accommodations throughout the State. The highlight of the event will be a charity fashion show with local models - specifically targeting high income families and individuals with a strong propensity to travel. The cost to participate varies from \$900 - \$2,500 depending on type of supplier and level of participation, plus travel expenses. The deadline to participate is September 1, 2008. Early booking discounts may apply. Please contact Kristy Swanson at kswanson@azot.gov or 602-364-3696.

Industry News

Passport Card Production in Full Swing

The Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security announced this week that the new U.S. Passport Card is now in full production and is being distributed. The Passport Card is a wallet-sized document for land and sea travel between the U.S. and Mexico, Canada, the Caribbean and Bermuda. It is not valid for international travel by air. More than 350,000 Americans pre-ordered the U.S. Passport Cards since the State Department began taking orders in February. The Passport Card is available for \$45 for first-time adult applicants and \$35 for children under 16. Adults who currently have valid passports can apply for the passport card by mail for \$20. (www.TravelTrade.com, 7/23)

First U.S Official Travel Web Site Launched

DiscoverAmerica.com, the United States' first-ever official travel and tourism Web site, has been successfully launched with language-specific sites in the leading international travel markets, announced the Travel Industry Association (TIA). "The Web sites target consumers in the five countries that account for 75 percent of all inbound travel to the United States: Canada (English- and French-speaking), Mexico, the United Kingdom, Japan and Germany. Interactive content for all 50 states, the five territories, dozens of cities and attractions, and official entry information from US government sources is presented in the native languages of each market," said TIA.

DiscoverAmerica.com is the result of a cooperative agreement awarded by the U.S. Department of Commerce to the Travel Industry Association (TIA) in January 2007. The six websites took about 16 months to research, develop and build. In addition to its wealth of destination content, the websites feature an interactive map, an activity finder that sorts popular trip activities, booking opportunities through in-market travel specialists and through Travelocity, travel deals in the US, and a Stories section for travelers to post authentic reviews and comments. (*Report by David Wilkening, TravelMole e-Newsletter*)

More States Plan Enhanced Licenses to Ease Border Traffic

A growing number of states on the borders with Canada and Mexico are establishing or considering enhanced driver's licenses designed to give residents a more convenient identification option for border crossings. In February, Washington became the first state to establish the new licenses. To receive a license labeled "enhanced," applicants are required to show proof of U.S. citizenship in addition to the other identification documents required for obtaining traditional licenses. New York and Vermont will follow in coming months. Arizona has proposed the idea for residents there, and Michigan is working toward a plan.

The move toward enhanced driver's licenses in states bordering Canada and Mexico is being driven by the federal Western Hemisphere Travel Initiative. In June 2009, the initiative will begin requiring U.S. citizens to have a proof-of-citizenship document, passport or some other federally approved identification for getting into the country through land or seaports. (*Page 2A, USA Today*)

ARA Announces First Arizona Restaurant Week

The Arizona Restaurant Association is planning the Phoenix area's inaugural Arizona Restaurant Week. Restaurants participating in the Sept. 20-26 event will offer three-course menu selections for a fixed price of \$29 per person or \$58 per couple. The seven-day event is aimed at promoting the Phoenix market as a premier culinary destination. In Los Angeles, 90 percent of restaurants received new customers as a result of a similar event. Participation fees for restaurants are \$350 and a \$25 gift card, which will be used to promote the event. Restaurants can visit

www.scottsdalecvb.com/docs/AZ_Rest%20Week.pdf for the online application. The Scottsdale Convention & Visitors Bureau is partnering on this first-time event. For more: www.arizonarestaurantweek.com.

NTA OKs New China Inbound Tour Operators

The National Tour Association has submitted to the U.S. Commerce Department a second list of 68 approved tour operators for its China Inbound Program. Under the memorandum of understanding signed by the U.S. and China in December, group leisure travel to the U.S. is now permitted and U.S. destinations are now allowed to market themselves in China. Chinese travelers had previously been restricted to visiting the U.S. for business purposes. In February, the China National Tourism Administration appointed the NTA to act as the U.S. organization determining which U.S. tour operators will be allowed to work with Chinese tourists visiting the U.S. With the second list of approved operators, the total number of tour operators for the China Inbound Program is 160. (www.TravelWeekly.com, 7/16; www.TravelAgentCentral.com, 7/17)

Americans Cutting Expenses, but not Travel

A study by market research firm GfK Roper Consulting says that nine out of 10 U.S. citizens are minimizing discretionary spending due to current economic conditions, CNN reports. Concerns about inflation, oil prices and rising unemployment deter spending in many areas, but travel is not one of them. According to the study, 59 percent of Americans still plan to take a trip in the next six months that takes place at least 100 miles away from home--a number only slightly below the 61 percent average of recent years. Vacations will still happen, albeit with altered plans as the report also shows that the majority of travelers will take trips closer to home and more likely within the continental U.S. instead of outside the country. (www.TravelAgentCentral.com, 7/16)